

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CSCE, NATO, PARM, NO
SUBJ: SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN NATO EXERCISE ARCTIC EXPRESS

1. OSLO'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS DAILY, AFTENPOSTEN, GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE FEB 16 TO THE SOVIET ACCEPTANCE OF THE GON INVITATION TO SEND OBSERVERS TO ARCTIC EXPRESS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN TROMS, NORWAY, MARCH 1 TO 6. THE MOD CONFIRMED THE MEDIA REPORT THAT THE SOVIET DEFENSE ATTACHE IN OSLO (CAPT IVAN SMIRNOV) AND HIS DEPUTY (ARMY MAJOR J. SERBIN) AS WELL AS THE POLISH ATTACHE (COL W. WOJCIK) WILL OBSERVE THE MANEUVERS. HUNGARY, THE ONLY OTHER WARSAW PACT INVITEE, HAS NOT YET RESPONDED.

2. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS AND THE MOD, THE EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES WERE FIRST INVITED (AND DECLINED) TO ATTEND A NATO EXERCISE
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(TEAMWORK) IN 1976. TWO NORWEGIAN OFFICERS OBSERVED A SOVIET EXERCISE NEAR LENINGRAD IN 1976, WHILE SEVERAL RUSSIANS ATTENDED A 1977 NATO MANEUVER IN THE FRG. THE NORWEGIANS AND OTHER ALLIES HAVE BEEN INVITED TO VISIT A SOVIET EXERCISE NEAR KIEV LATER THIS YEAR.

3. AFTENPOSTEN CONCLUDED ITS DISCUSSION OF THE SOVIET ATTENDANCE

AT ARCTIC EXPRESS BY POINTING OUT THAT MOSCOW HAD STRONGLY
CRITICIZED FRG PARTICIPATION IN NATO EXERCISES (IN NORWAY)AND
(IN A SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS REFERENCE TO FUTURE EXERCISES)
THAT IN FACT THE GON HAD LIMITED THE NUMBER OF GERMAN TROOPS
WHICH WOULD TAKE PART. WITHOUT COMMENTING, THE IMPRESSION
CLEARLY LEFT WITH THE READER WAS THAT THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT
WAS ACQUIESCING IN THE RUSSIAN DESIRE FOR A GREATER VOICE IN
NORWEGIAN SECURITY AFFAIRS.

4. COMMENT: WHILE THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE COGNASCENTI
WILL RECOGNIZE THAT SOVIET OBSERVATION AT ARCTIC EXPRESS
BELONGS IN THE CSCE/CBM CONTEXT, THE AVERAGE NORWEGIAN
COULD NOT HELP BUT CONCLUDE THAT THE GON IS GOING SOFT
ON SOVIETS. IN ANY EVENT, THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL DOUBTLESS
USE THE EVENT TO HIGHLIGHT THEIR CRITICISM OF NORWEGIAN
SECURITY POLICY AND THE COUNTRY'S STANCE VIS A VIS THE SOVIET
UNION.
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